

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In accordance with the provisions of the Massachusetts General laws, Chapter 30A, Section 20, notice is hereby given for the following meeting of the:

***Arlington School Committee
Standing Subcommittee: Facilities
Thursday, October 19, 2017
6:00 PM***

*Arlington High School
School Committee Room, 6th Floor
869 Mass Avenue
Arlington, MA*

Public Participation

Playground Space Needs at Hardy

Conference Scheduling and Electronic Communication

Adjournment

The listings of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair, which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

Stated times and time amounts, listed in parenthesis, are the estimated amount of time for that particular agenda item. Actual times may be shorter or longer depending on the time needed to fully explore the topic.

Submitted by Jennifer Susse, Chair



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Approve of draft minutes of 05 31 2017

ATTACHMENTS:

Type	File Name	Description
▢ Minutes	Facilities_Meeting_05_31_2017.docx	05 31 2017 Draft Facilities Meeting

MINUTES

Facilities Subcommittee Meeting 5/31/17

In Attendance:

Superintendent: Kathy Body

School Committee: Jennifer Susse, Cindy Starks

Parents: Brendan Sullivan, Josh Smift, Ginna Reeder, Michael Phelan, Kate Leary, Ethan Zimmer,
Heather Calvin-Bottis

The meeting started at 6:08.

Hardy Playground

Several Hardy parents were concerned about playground space for the younger kids while the Hardy addition is being constructed during the 2017/18 school year.

Dr. Bodie explained that the original plan was to wait until the addition was finished to construct a playground for younger kids on the Lake Street side, though she was always planning to enclose that space next year with a fence. Dr. Bodie now thinks that it makes sense to do something earlier. Some possibilities include: i) asking Capital Planning for the money for the playground a year earlier, ii) adding blacktop or woodchips so kids can play there when it is muddy, iii) also adding mobile play equipment that can be used now and in the future.

Dr. Bodie plans to consult with a playground expert to come up with some ideas. She also wanted to let the committee know that Parks and rec is planning a multi-use analysis of all playgrounds, to be completed in the next few years.

Parents asked whether we could use this analysis to help with the Hardy playground. Dr. Bodie answered that it would not be immediately helpful, as the analysis will take a few years to complete.

Dr. Bodie also provided the following General information:

Information on the Hardy Addition

- The Request for Proposals (RFP) for and Owner's Project Manager (OPM) closed last week.
- The RFP for a Designer just went up today (5/31)
- Construction will start in the Fall. (November 1st)
- There will be a parent night at Hardy once an OPM is chosen. Probably when school starts.

- The current plan to add extra cafeteria space is to convert the current music room to a quiet lunch space for children who need that.
- The notice for a new principal will be posted in December/January
- The amount budgeted for a new playground is \$120K

Systems Concerns

Heather Calvin-Bottis told us a story that involved several frustrations she had when she received an automated message one morning telling her that her kindergarten was not at school. She had last seen her kindergartener getting on the Bishop bus that morning. First, the automated message was hard to access, as cannot be translated into text. Thinking her son's reported absence was probably a mistake she nevertheless, in due diligence, tried to access a live person from the message. Although there appeared to be an option to connect to a live person, choosing that option just caused the call to be dropped. She then called the Bishop school several times, only to be transferred--first, back to the automatic system, and, second, to the Stratton secretary. Finally, the Stratton secretary enlisted the help of central administration, who were extremely helpful. A final frustration for Ms. Calvin-Bottis was that she was not able to get a response from her email to the administration asking to be told whether these systematic problems had been fixed.

Ms. Starks asked whether David Good had received a copy of Heather's email, and was told he had. Ms. Susse pointed out that this is the second example of a new technological system that has more problems than the system it replaced. (the first being the new scheduling software). Both Ms. Susse and Ms. Starks asked that David Good be enlisted to review the new communication system, and that Dr. Bodie report back to the School Committee about how we plan to fix the problem—whether by choosing a new system or by adapting this system.

Ms. Susse pointed out that there seemed to be three problems involved: 1) a problem with the technology—the system looked like it had the ability to transfer to a live person, but doesn't; 2) a personnel problem that requires clear messaging from the administration about how to handle parent calls, and 3) a general problem about how parent emails should be handled. She asked that Dr. Bodie present her recommendations for fixing the first two problems at the last School Committee meeting in June.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12.



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Playground Space Needs at Hardy

ATTACHMENTS:

Type	File Name	Description
▣ Presentation	Hardy_Playground_Needs_Overview_(2).pdf	Presentation of Hardy playground needs

HARDY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Playground Overview

October 2017



Hardy's Situation

Hardy's population has grown nearly 30% in the past five years, and we expect that number to rise to 35% by the 2018-19 school year, when the much-needed six-classroom addition is complete. (Thank you!)

We can't expand Hardy's small parcel of land, so we must make sure all the land we have is used thoughtfully. Developing the area that runs along Lake Street is a good start, but it does not address all of Hardy's outdoor space needs. Our limited space will soon need to serve a population of about 500 students.

The Town's Current Plan

- Build a playground in the area along Lake St., using \$120K from the Capital Budget or a CPA grant.
- Necessary to *replace* the K play structure and land that will be lost to construction. Thank you for this allocation! It's an important start.
- The completed Lake St. playground is likely to accommodate two sections, about 40-50 students at a time.
- Playground will be designed for use by K/1.
- Yard has mature trees that limit the usable space but should not be removed. (They do need pruning and may currently present hazards.)

The Town's Current Plan

- Makes no improvements to Chandler St. playground.
- K structure is removed permanently.
- One deteriorating play structure remains on main playground. Swings are moved. Full basketball court is repainted. Most of playground remains blacktop.
- Hardy breaks even on play equipment and space, but there is **no net gain**.

The Plan Hardy Students Need

- Offers a **net gain** of play equipment and thoughtfully planned play areas to accommodate enrollment growth.
- Undertakes a holistic design process to optimize use of all Hardy land—including the Chandler St. playground. This design process happens *in conjunction with* the design process for the six-classroom addition.
- Seeks input from teachers, including PE teachers.
- Seeks input from community members.
- Allocates additional funds soon so the Chandler St. playground work can begin when the addition is complete.

Chandler St. Possibilities

A design process will provide critical information, but options raised by three local landscape architects who have shared their insight include:

- an additional play structure, or several smaller pieces of play equipment
- Removal or relocation of basketball court(s)
- Installation of a section of turf
- Removal of fenced alley
- Claiming more land for the playground by reconfiguring the parking lot and bus turnaround
- Reduction of impervious surface
- Tree planting

Chandler Street Playground



Lake Street Area



GRADE

SECTIONS

K	4
1	4
2	3
3	3
4	3
5	2

Hardy Enrollment

Spring 2016 413

Fall 2016

Spring 2017

Fall 2017

Spring 2018

Fall 2018

Spring 2019

Fall 2019

Spring 2020

2015-16 SCHOOL YEAR

The **last year** all classes used Chandler St. playground **without safety concerns** from teachers and administrators. Playground is at capacity.



GRADE

SECTIONS

K	4
1	4
2	4
3	3
4	3
5	3

Hardy Enrollment

Spring 2016 413

Fall 2016

447

Spring 2017

(+8%)

Fall 2017

Spring 2018

Fall 2018

Spring 2019

Fall 2019

Spring 2020

2016-17 SCHOOL YEAR

- Teachers deem it unsafe to have 4 large K classes on Chandler St. playground.
- Lake St. area used for half of K classes, until weather makes conditions untenable.
- By late fall, K classes split outdoor recess, reducing outdoor recess time to 15 minutes.



A Dilemma for Teachers

- In spring, 2017, K teachers try all four classes on Chandler St. playground again and decide it will work for now. (K students are not permitted on the larger structure.)
- Students are older by this time of year and understand school routines and rules. The space is still more crowded than teachers would like.
- **Teachers should not be in the position of having to choose between outdoor recess and safety.**
- Without plans to improve the Chandler St. playground, they'll be back in the same uncomfortable position when the existing K structure is removed—even with the new Lake St. playground.

GRADE

SECTIONS

K	4
1	4
2	4
3	4
4	3
5	3

Hardy Enrollment

Spring 2016 413

Fall 2016 447

Spring 2017

Fall 2017 459
(+2%)

Spring 2018

Fall 2018

Spring 2019

Fall 2019

Spring 2020

FALL 2017 (TODAY)

- Chandler St. playground and Lake St. area both in use.
- Temporary fence and wood chips installed on Lake St. Temporary equipment from school dept. has not yet arrived. PTO has provided sand tables and basketball hoops.
- Playground injuries expose safety issues due to deteriorating condition of Chandler St. play equipment.



GRADE

SECTIONS

K	4
1	4
2	4
3	4
4	4
5	3

Hardy Enrollment

Spring 2016	413
Fall 2016	
Spring 2017	447
Fall 2017	
Spring 2018	459 (+2%)
Fall 2018	
Spring 2019	
Fall 2019	
Spring 2020	

SPRING 2018

- Additional playground space will be lost due to construction for addition (based on architect presentation, up to 50% of the space may be off limits).
- Lake St. area will need to be used more consistently by many grade levels, with temporary equipment.



GRADE

SECTIONS

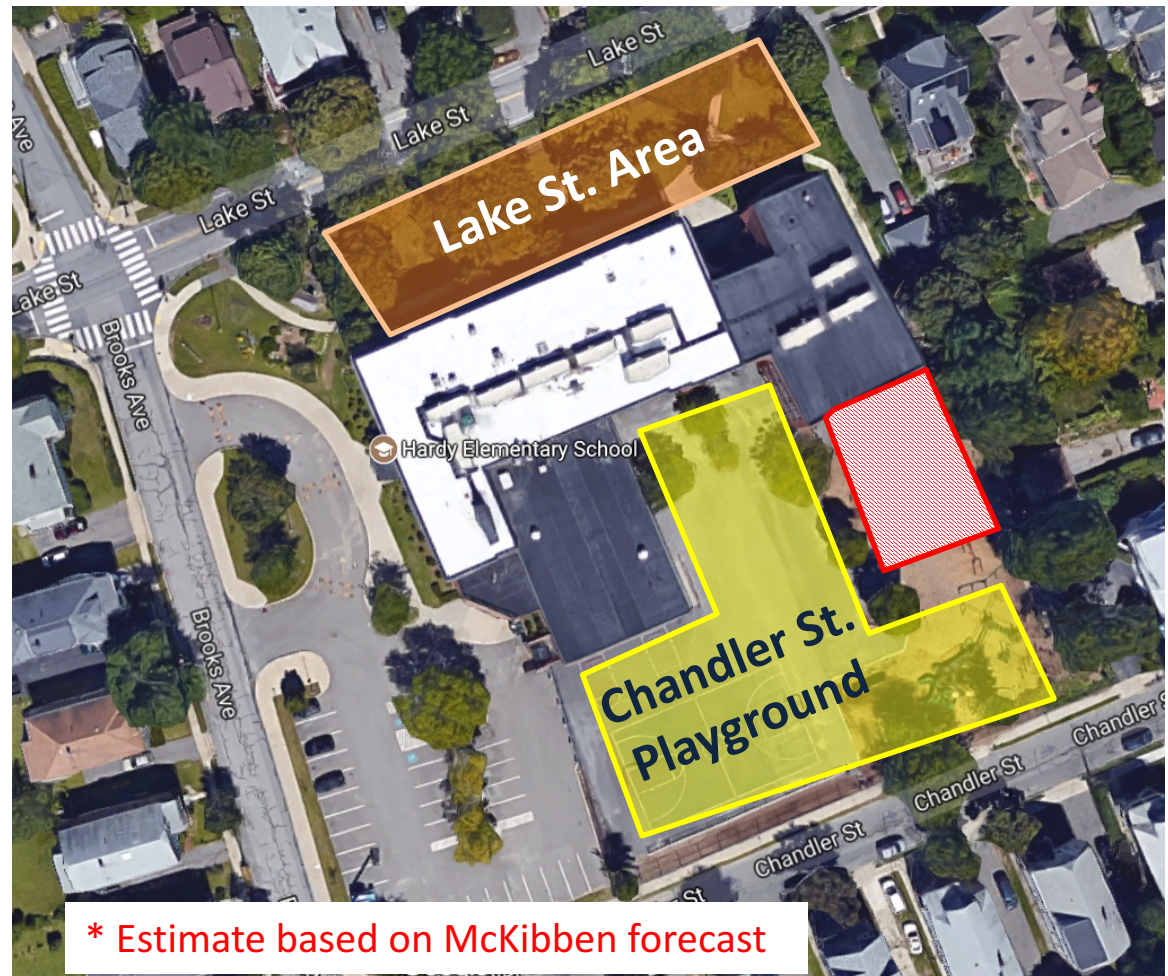
K	4
1	4
2	4
3	4
4	4
5	4

Hardy Enrollment

Spring 2016	413
Fall 2016	447
Spring 2017	
Fall 2017	459
Spring 2018	
Fall 2018	472*
Spring 2019	(+3%)
Fall 2019	
Spring 2020	

FALL 2019

- Ongoing construction will continue to limit space on Chandler St. playground.
- Lake St. area will need to be used consistently (still no permanent improvements to space).



* Estimate based on McKibben forecast

GRADE

SECTIONS

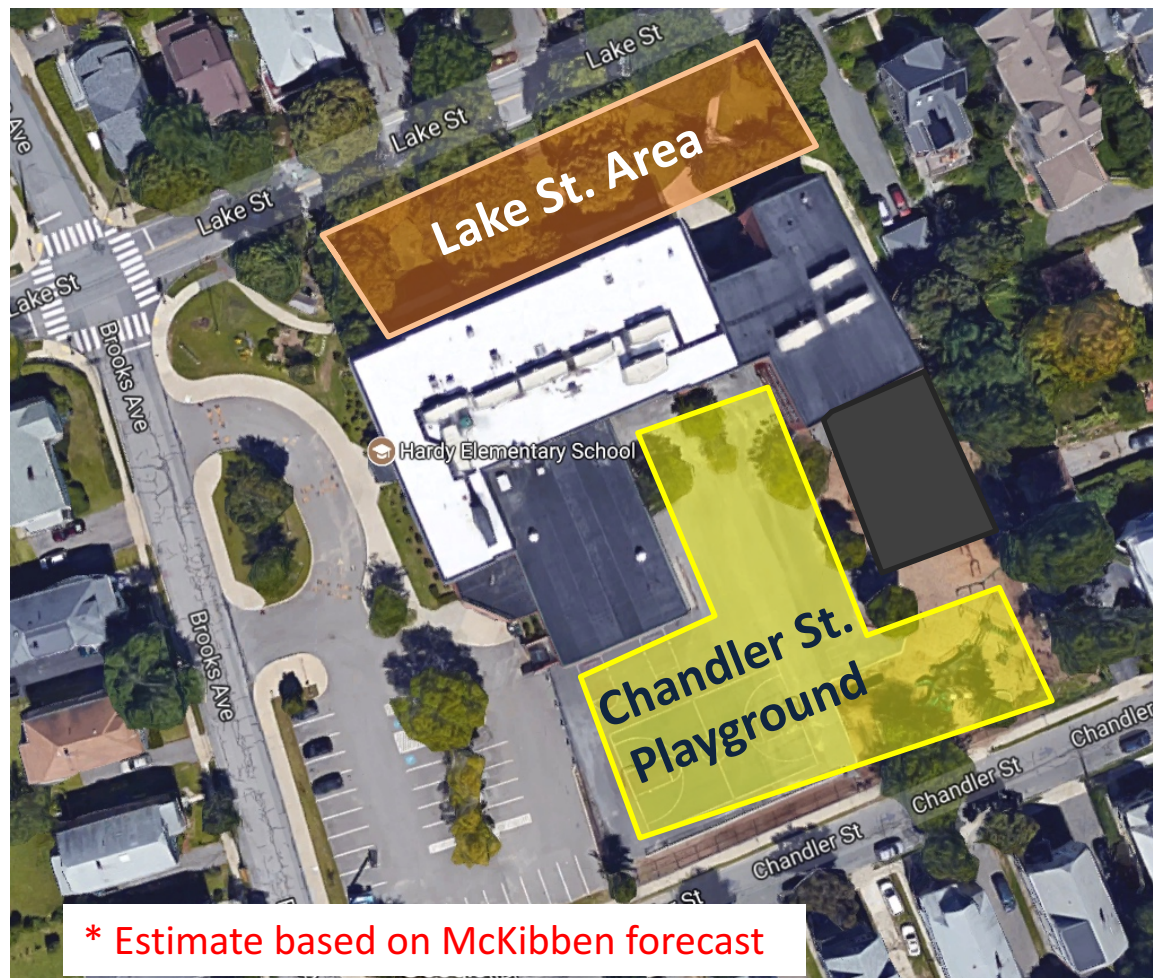
K	4
1	4
2	4
3	4
4	4
5	4

Hardy Enrollment

Spring 2016	413
Fall 2016	447
Spring 2017	
Fall 2017	459
Spring 2018	
Fall 2018	472* (+3%)
Spring 2019	
Fall 2019	
Spring 2020	

SPRING 2019

- Addition completed; playground will be permanently reduced in size.
- School enrollment will have **increased by at least 60 students and 5 classes since 2016** (when pre-construction playground was at capacity)
- Lake St. area will still have minimal improvements



GRADE

SECTIONS

K	4
1	4
2	4
3	4
4	4
5	4

Hardy Enrollment

Spring 2016 413

Fall 2016 447

Spring 2017 459

Fall 2017 459

Spring 2018 472*

Fall 2018 472*

Spring 2019 489*

Fall 2019 489*

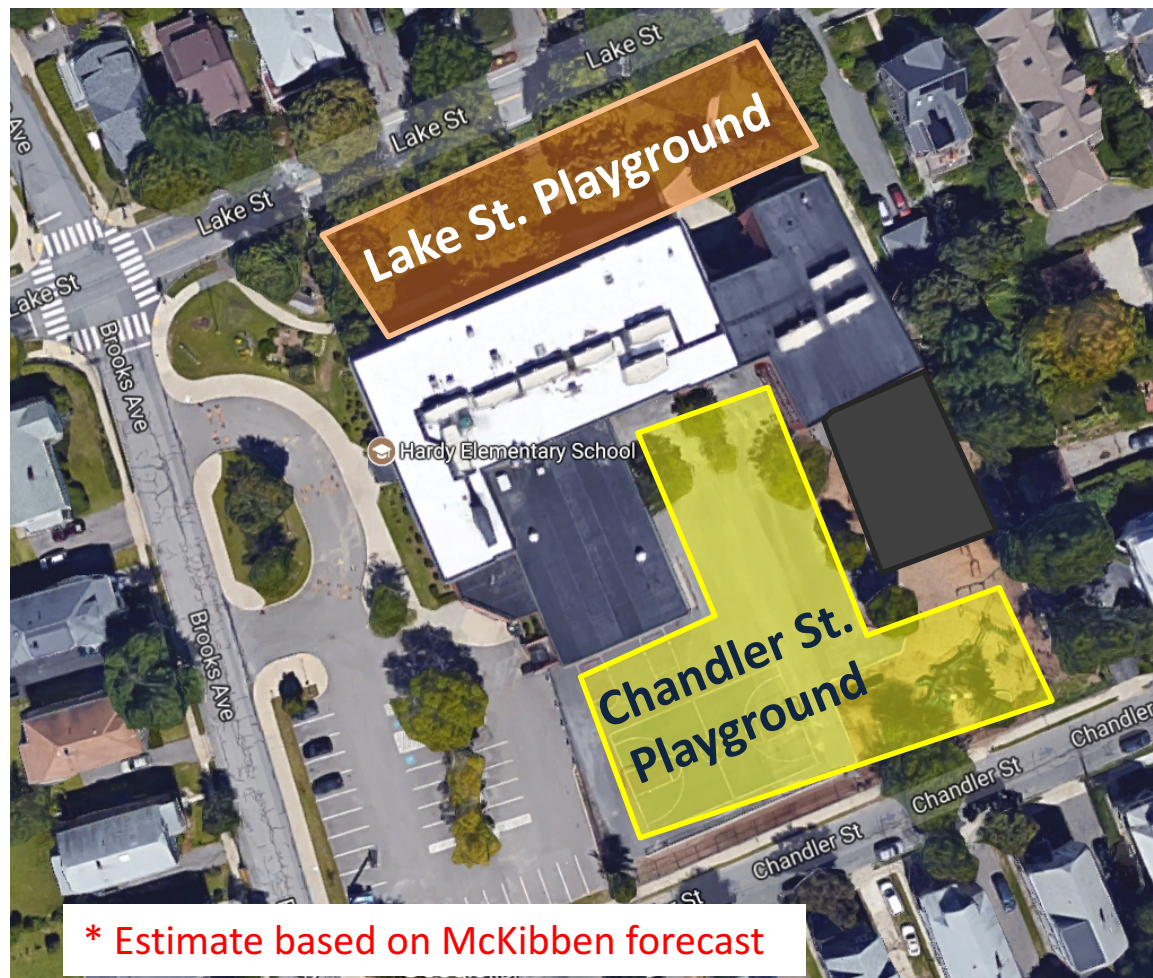
(+4%, total of 18% increase since 2016)

Spring 2020

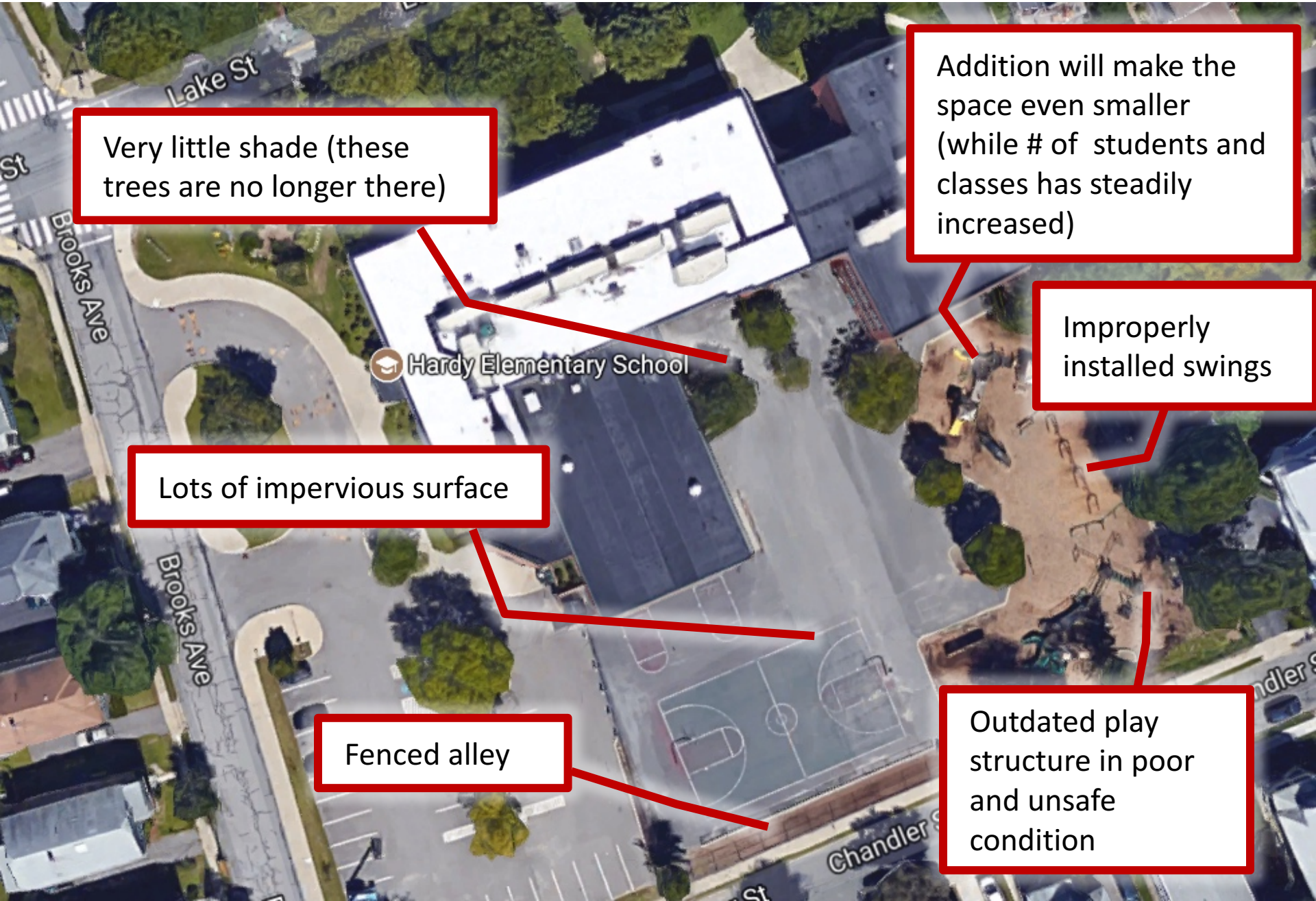
2019-20 SCHOOL YEAR

- Lake St. playground built (using \$120K from capital budget).
- Hardy's population will have grown 18% since 2016.

This is the time to overhaul the Chandler St playground, too!



WHY REDESIGN THE CHANDLER ST. PLAYGROUND?



Very little shade (these trees are no longer there)

Addition will make the space even smaller (while # of students and classes has steadily increased)

Improperly installed swings

Lots of impervious surface

Fenced alley

Outdated play structure in poor and unsafe condition

Majority of playground composed of blacktop basketball court and two half courts



Fenced alley filled with wood chips serves no purpose



Blacktop courtyard



Before addition



After: approximate scale of building volume added



Deteriorating Conditions

- The only structure that will remain in the Chandler St. playground after construction is deteriorating and presents many safety concerns.
- A broken cable recently caused a facial laceration.
- Wood chips barely cover the ground, increasing the risk of head injury in the event of a fall.
Exposed tarp is a tripping hazard.

Loose bolts with sharp metal, broken cable on bridge



Broken structures



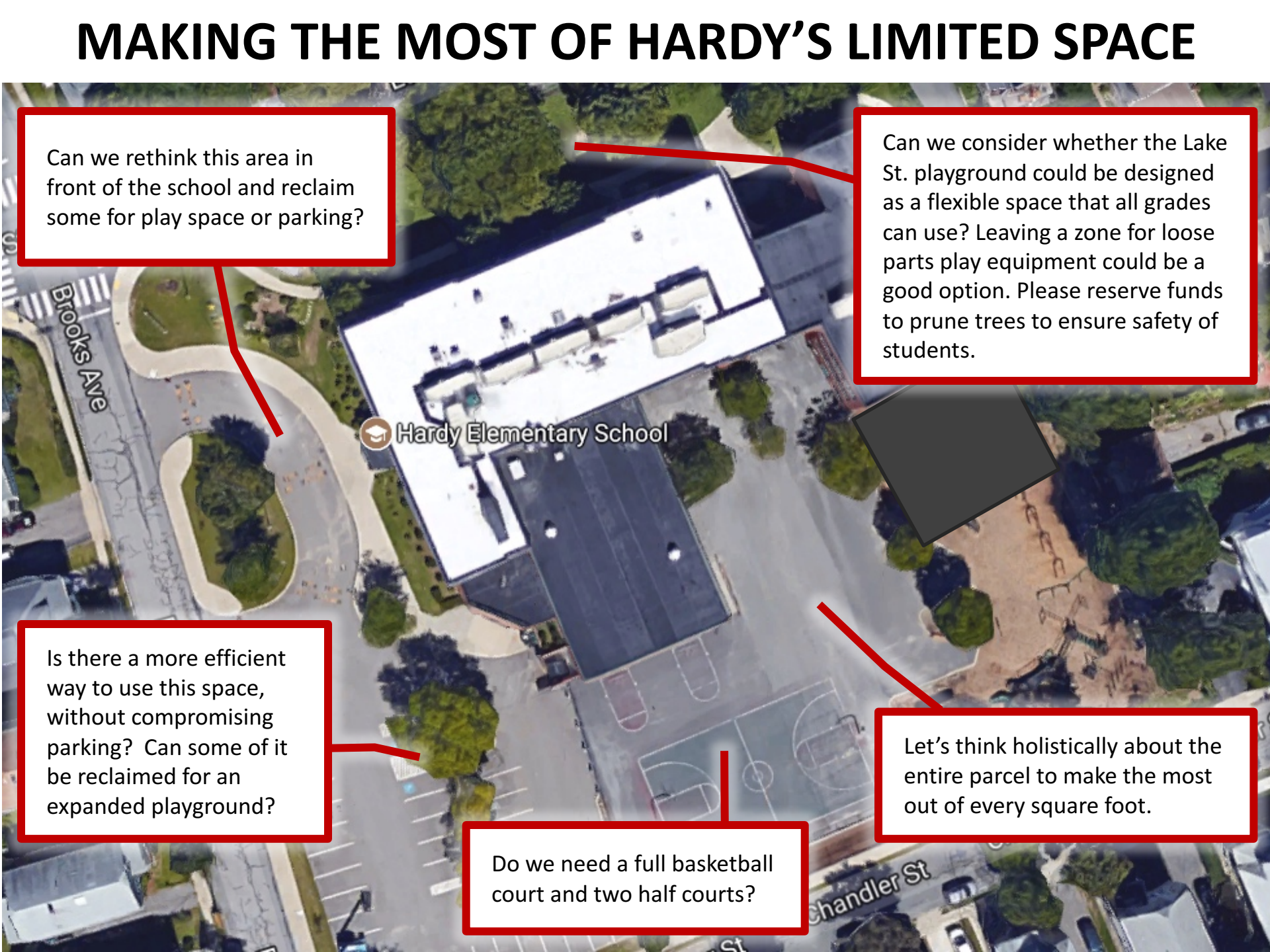
Inadequate wood chips and exposed tarp



Years of Requests

Parts and wood chips are on order now, and wood chips are expected to arrive next week. However, parents and school administrators have been asking for help with these issues for years. Parts for the structure were only ordered after a serious injury, and we don't know when they're due to arrive.

MAKING THE MOST OF HARDY'S LIMITED SPACE

An aerial photograph of Hardy Elementary School and its surrounding area. The school building is a large, white, rectangular structure with a flat roof. To the left of the school is a parking lot and a road labeled 'Brooks Ave'. To the right of the school is a playground area with a large, dark, irregular shape. Below the school is a basketball court. The entire area is surrounded by trees and other buildings. Red lines connect the callout boxes to specific areas of the image.

Can we rethink this area in front of the school and reclaim some for play space or parking?

Can we consider whether the Lake St. playground could be designed as a flexible space that all grades can use? Leaving a zone for loose parts play equipment could be a good option. Please reserve funds to prune trees to ensure safety of students.

Is there a more efficient way to use this space, without compromising parking? Can some of it be reclaimed for an expanded playground?

Do we need a full basketball court and two half courts?

Let's think holistically about the entire parcel to make the most out of every square foot.

Hardy Needs a Landscape Architect

- Hardy is the only one of our seven elementary schools that isn't adjacent to a town park or field. There is no field to play on during recess or PE, and no room for overflow.
- A landscape design professional can analyze the space we have and make recommendations. Adding equipment to the main playground piecemeal won't serve the population long-term. Good design will be a worthwhile investment in the future of the Hardy School.
- Adequate outdoor space is an essential part of a functional school.

Hardy Needs More Funding

- To hire a landscape designer to make a plan.
- To execute a project that goes well beyond building a Lake St. playground.
- This is why a parent suggested that the School Committee look into a CPA grant. The Hardy playground is a heavily used community resource in a densely populated part of town that does not have a lot of open space. CPA funds can be used for school playgrounds that are open to the public.

Parents Want to Help

- We understand enrollment growth has placed enormous pressure on town budgets and taxpayers.
- Hardy PTO plans to make raising money for equipment for the Chandler St. playground the focus of our silent auction this year, and will consider other options, too.
- We know the funds we raise will be a relatively small percentage of the total budget, but we want to contribute. Realizing the full potential of Hardy's outdoor space will help our own children, but it's also important to us to help build a resource that will serve our community for years to come.

Thank You

Thank you for your attention to this presentation, your service in town government, and the steps you've already taken to ensure that Hardy students have what they need. We hope you will consider these additional steps to make the Hardy project a holistic expansion with adequate outdoor play opportunities.

Please contact Kate Leary with any questions.

kleary@gmail.com

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